



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture



I am Jarrod Martin.  
I am a Conservationist.

## Jarrod Martin

District Conservationist - Merced County, Calif.

**Conservation Planning Status:**  
Certified Planner

**Year Started with NRCS:** 2011

**Positions Held:** Earth Team Volunteer, Soil Conservationist,  
District Conservationist.

**Educational Background:** California State University  
Stanislaus: Bachelor's Degree in Agricultural Studies with a  
concentration in Ag Biology.

### Why did you choose a career with NRCS?

Before finishing college, I was introduced to the District Conservationist of the Modesto Field office. He conveyed the mission of NRCS and spoke with me about how the local offices were getting conservation on the ground. His sales pitch piqued my interest so I decided to sign up as an Earth Team Volunteer to get a firsthand look. After a few months I had decided that I really enjoyed the NRCS family atmosphere and the clients that we work with.

### Why is conserving natural resources important to you?

I believe that we should all be good stewards of the land. There are a lot of people that have said similar things about how we are only here for a short time and the land will be here long after we're gone. I totally believe in that and that we need to leave the land in as good or better shape than when we inherited it. I have two children and I would like for them and their children to be able to enjoy healthy natural resources.

### What has been your favorite part about working for NRCS?

I love spending time outdoors. I grew up in the country on the outskirts of Tracy, CA where I spent a lot of time fishing, hunting, and boating on the Delta. Being able to see direct resource benefits as a result of conservation practices that I've planned benefiting areas where I grew up has been extremely rewarding. I've had the opportunity to plan conservation practices on farms that stopped pesticide and nutrient-laden irrigation runoff water from entering the river where I fish and swim. Being able to get conservation on the

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ground in my own back yard has been extremely rewarding and one of the best parts about the work that I do.

## **Why do you think conservation planning is an important aspect of what you do for landowners?**

The conversations during conservation planning help landowners and NRCS staff develop relationships that are key to the planning process. The planning process is ongoing just as the relationship with the landowner should be. Any office or conservationist can get a landowner to complete a practice that the landowner already had in mind. The real successes are when you can develop a rapport and get the landowner interested in returning, adding to their plan over time, and including conservation as a long term goal of the operation. Conservation planning is essential for helping farmers establish their conservation goals, identify issues they might not know they had, and learn that there is always something extra they can do that is mutually beneficial to their operation and their land.



## **What is your favorite memory of your conservation planning experience?**

I worked with a producer who had been impacted by the recent drought. His irrigation water allocation had been reduced to half of what he was used to having and did not have a well to supplement his irrigation water. He came in to apply to replace his existing flood irrigation system with micro-irrigation. As we were planning I realized that his existing methods of irrigation water management could use some improvement. I worked with the producer before the next irrigation season to help him better understand how his new irrigation system would run and how much water his soil would hold. At the end of the season, the producer was extremely appreciative of the help that NRCS had provided and said that the new irrigation system and water management helped him stretch his limited irrigation water throughout the season.

## **What would you say to an employee in the process of becoming a certified planner?**

They should think of the process as a learning experience. There is always something new to learn from landowners even if you've been a certified planner and you're up for



re-certification. Also take the time to learn from your mentor/reviewer. The planning process is a great time to ask your reviewer what questions they would have asked, or how they may have handled different situations. The process isn't just a time to show your planning competency, but to also reflect and see how you can strengthen your weak points and leverage your strengths as a planner.

## **Any advice for apprentice planners?**

Take the time to develop a relationship with the landowner. Tell them about yourself, ask about themselves, and take a serious interest in them. If you take the time to do this, it will build trust and they will be more willing to adopt your suggestions. It makes the planning process much more enjoyable too.



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